

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Greeheyco Access Road Land Use License #6206
Proposed Implementation Date:	August 2012
Proponent:	Greeheyco, Inc.
Location:	Section 16, Township 9 South, Range 25 East (Common Schools Trust)
County:	Carbon County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The Proponent has applied to the DNRC Southern Land Office (SLO) for a Land Use License to permit the use of an existing two-track road to access BLM land, specifically Section 27-T9S-R25E, for an exploratory oil and gas well. If the well proves productive, this LUL could be modified to encompass the more intense use of the road to new wells or an easement may be pursued for the road and/or any other required facilities to serve the well. The road bisects the Trust land from north to south and is $\pm 5,470'$ long and is illustrated on attached "Exhibit A". The Land Use License would be approved for a 5 year term with the potential for it to be renewed or converted to an easement.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

No formal public scoping was performed by the Southern Land Office (SLO) for this proposed project. The state grazing lessee, Brett Crosby, was contacted by Greeheyco and has signed a Settlement of Damages form.

The road was inspected mid-July 2012 by Gary Brandenburg, SLO Land Use Specialist.

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

The exploratory well that is proposed to be accessed by this road is located on Federal land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Proposed Alternative: Approve the issuance of a Land Use License to allow road use by Greeheyco, Inc. on State Trust land described as Section 16-T9S-R31E in Carbon County for an exploratory oil and gas wells on BLM land south of the state land.

No Action Alternative: Deny the request by Greeheyco to utilize an existing two-track road on state Trust land to access an exploratory oil and gas well.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

All proposed project activities would remain on the existing two-track road. Installation and maintenance of any necessary drainage and erosion control features by the proponent would be required. Minimal impacts are expected.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

Sage Creek and associated wetlands, as well as a stock pond located in the SE¼ of the subject tract. The proposed travel route would use an existing two-track north to south road that is located approximately ¼ mile to the west of these water features. The road is up on a bench from these features and is shown on attached Exhibit A.

Due to the distance from the existing road to the water features and the proponent installing and maintaining any necessary drainage or erosion control features on the road, minimal impacts are anticipated.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

There would be some short-term airborne particulates from increased traffic on the existing two-track road. Due to the remoteness of the proposed project area and distance to any residences, no significant adverse impacts are anticipated.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

All proposed project activities would remain within the current two-track road footprint and minimal vegetative disturbance is expected. No significant impacts to vegetation cover, quantity or quality are expected by implementing the proposed alternative.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

A variety of big game, small mammals, raptors, songbirds and grouse potentially use this area. Due to the use being restricted to the existing two-track road, no significant impacts to terrestrial, avian and aquatic life and habitats are expected to occur as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

A proposed project area search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program database identified seven vertebrate animals and two vascular plants that are listed as a species of concern or threatened species: Greater sage-

grouse, Burrowing Owl, Pinyon Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, blue-gray gnatcatcher, sage thrasher, Brewer's sparrow, white-tailed prairie dog, Gray's milkvetch and Geyer's milkvetch

Blue-gray gnatcatchers, Pinyon Jay, white-tailed prairie dogs, Brewer's sparrows, burrowing owls, are known to exist in the proposed project area. Due to the proposed project activities using an existing road, minimal impacts are anticipated.

Greater sage-grouse occupy the proposed project area. There are leks identified approximately one mile west of the subject road. The License will not allow any activity on the Trust land between March 1 and July 15 so that there would be no potential to disrupt lekking and nesting activity near the proposed project area. The existing road will have limited use; therefore no significant impacts are anticipated.

Sage thrashers are known to exist approximately two miles away from the proposed project area and probably inhabit the proposed project area. Due to the proposed activities limited to the use of an existing road, no significant impacts are anticipated.

Geyer's milkvetch and Gray's milkvetch is found approximately one half mile west of the proposed project area. Due to the distance and proposed project activities limited to using an existing road, no significant impacts are anticipated.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

There are no cultural resources known to exist within the proposed project area. Additionally, when SLO staff visited the site in July, a visual survey of the project area was conducted and no cultural features were noted in the proposed project area. No significant adverse impacts to historical and archaeological sites are expected by implementing the proposed alternative.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

The proposed project activities would be restricted to an existing two-track road. The proposed project area is located in a fairly remote area and is not visible from any populated areas and there are no residences nearby. No significant adverse impacts to aesthetics are expected by implementing the proposed alternative.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

No significant impacts to environmental resources of land, water, air or energy are expected as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

There are no other known state or federal environmental reviews taking place in the subject area. However since the exploratory well is located on the BLM, there may be additional reviews that already have been performed to permit the well.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES* potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.
- Explain **POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS** following each resource heading.
- Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

No significant adverse impacts to human health and safety are expected to occur as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

No significant impacts to industrial, commercial and agricultural activities and production are expected to occur as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

The proposed action is not expected to have a significant impact on the quantity and distribution of employment.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

The proposed action and the nature of the activity is not expected to have a significant positive or negative impact to the local or state tax base.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

The implementation of the proposed alternative will not generate any additional demands on services provided by Carbon County.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

Implementation of the proposed alternative will not conflict with any locally adopted plans.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

Persons possessing a valid state lands recreational use license may conduct recreational activities on the tract with permission from the surrounding private landowners that would control access to this landlocked tract. The proposed project would not affect the existing access for the general public.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

No significant adverse impacts to density and distribution of population and housing are expected to occur as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposed alternative.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

The proposed alternative would not directly impact cultural uniqueness or diversity.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

The proposed alternative to issue a Land Use License for road use would provide a \$25 application fee and an annual payment of \$300 to the Common Schools Trust.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Jeff Bollman	Date: 30 July 2012
	Title: Southern Land Office Area Planner	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

After reviewing the Environmental Assessment, the proposed alternative has been selected and it is recommended that a Land Use License be issued to permit the use of the existing road to access BLM land (Section 27-T9S-R25E) for an exploratory oil and gas well. The proposed alternative can be implemented in a manner that is consistent with the long-term sustainable natural resource management of the area while also generating revenue for the common school trust.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The potential for significant impacts from the proposed action is minimal based on the type of action proposed, the potential for a relatively short duration of the road use and the fact that the road to be used is an existing two-track and no additional construction is planned. All identified potential impacts will be avoided or minimized by utilizing the mitigations listed below and no significant impacts are expected to occur as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

The mitigation measures that will be required by the issuance of the Land Use License include:

1. All vehicle traffic must stay on the permitted road (see Exhibit A).
2. The road will only be used in dry or frozen conditions.

3. The road shall only be used for access to one exploratory oil and gas well located in Section 27, Township 9 South, Range 25 East. Road use for additional wells or land will be reviewed and could be permitted as an Amendment to this License, which could result in a rental fee increase.
4. All vehicles, particularly the undercarriage, must be washed prior to entering the tract to assure removal of dirt and plant material and weed seeds.
5. Adequate drainage and/or erosion control devices/facilities shall be installed and maintained where necessary on the existing road.
6. The Licensee shall be responsible for controlling any noxious weeds introduced by Licensee's activity on state Trust land and shall prevent or eradicate the spread of those noxious weeds onto land adjoining the subject section.
7. No road use will be allowed between March 1 and July 15, unless approved by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.
8. The road will not be widened beyond its existing footprint without prior approval of the Southern Land Office.
9. Permission must be obtained from the private landowner with controlling access.
10. All necessary BLM permits must be secured.
11. Greeheyco, Inc. will be required to monitor and control weeds during the License period and for two years after termination of License.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

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EIS

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More Detailed EA

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No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name:	Matthew Wolcott
	Title:	Southern Land Office Area Manager
Signature: /s/ Matthew Wolcott		Date: July 31, 2012

Exhibit A – Trust Land and Road Location

